

For immediate release:

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Veterans Receive Additional Benefit and Investment Protection

KSC Aims to Increase Awareness of and Compliance with Veterans Protection Rules

The Office of the Kansas Securities Commissioner (KSC) is adopting a rule requiring the registered investment community to be aware of and comply with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (V.A.) rules about charging veterans for benefits advice. This announcement comes after reports of so-called “financial planners” charging veterans and their widows for advice otherwise available for free.

Most registered advisers and brokers provide sound, ethical advice to veterans and their families, but Kansas is seeing an uptick in complaints about persons charging fees to veterans to obtain their V.A. benefits. The V.A. prohibits charging veterans a fee for obtaining benefits unless the person is an authorized agent and has a written agreement for fees filed with the V.A.

“Our veterans offered to lay down their lives to defend our nation and way of life,” said Commissioner Wilson. “They and their families deserve our best efforts to prevent these questionable practices before they cause financial harm.”

Wayne Bollig, Director of Veterans Services for the Kansas Commission of Veterans Affairs (KCVA), brought the issue to the attention of Commissioner Wilson. Bollig hears often of “planners” approaching veterans -- sometimes in their nursing home beds -- to tell them that they can receive V.A. benefits if they just purchase the planner’s financial or insurance product.

Bollig stated, “It is outrageous to see a veteran or veteran’s widow being charged hundreds or thousands of dollars for advice they can get for free from any veterans’ organization in Kansas. The KCVA, with 11 offices around the state, partners with the V.F.W. and the American Legion and provides direct, no-cost assistance. We also work directly with Disabled American Veterans, the Military Order of the Purple Heart, among many veterans service organizations. All provide this advice as well as assistance in completing the forms to any veteran or family member who asks on behalf of a veteran or a widow.”

Many veterans and their families do not know what benefits the V.A. can provide to them. The V.A. benefits may differ based upon one’s combat service, or they may pertain only to those with certain types of medical conditions. Sometimes veterans’

spouses, widows or widowers are eligible. Once a veteran or his family gets free advice from a veterans group about their eligibility for benefits, then they can seek the advice of an investment adviser, broker, estate lawyer or other professional about planning the benefits into their investment portfolio.

Veterans who are seeking V.A. benefits advice should start with their local veterans' organization, like the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs at 785-296-3976 or www.kcva.org, the V.F.W. or American Legion, or call the V.A. at 1-800-827-1000. All representatives of local veterans groups are accredited and are required by law to attend annual training to maintain that accreditation. None charge a fee, and none require membership in their organization as a requirement.

Once they get this free benefit eligibility information, and if they determine they need further financial advice, they can call KSC at 1-800-232-9580 or visit www.ksc.ks.gov to check the registration and background of someone whose service they are considering using.

If any person claims they can help get you veterans benefits, ask to see their V.A. authorization letter. They must also present to you a written agreement disclosing their fees and file it with the V.A.

KSC is also providing general investment information for veterans to the KCVA for use in their outreach efforts. KCVA plans to distribute the educational materials at Kansas veterans homes, KCVA field offices and their enhanced veterans benefit program mobile offices that make stops throughout the state.

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The mission of the Office of the Kansas Securities Commissioner is to protect and inform Kansas investors, to promote integrity and full disclosure by issuers and securities professionals, to investigate and prosecute fraud and to foster capital formation. More detailed information may be found at www.ksc.ks.gov.